

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

By the *Office Action* of 15 October 2009, Claims 1-46 are pending in the Application, Claims 45-46 withdrawn, and Claims 1-44 rejected. Applicant thanks Examiner with appreciation for the careful consideration and examination given to the Application.

Applicant submits this *Response and Amendment* solely to facilitate prosecution. As such, Applicant reserves the right to present new or additional claims in this Application that have similar or broader scope as originally filed. Applicant also reserves the right to present additional claims in a later-filed continuation application that have similar or broader scope as originally filed. Accordingly, any amendment, argument, or claim cancellation presented during prosecution is not to be construed as abandonment or disclaimer of subject matter.

By the present *Response and Amendment*, all Claims are believed in condition for allowance. No new matter is believed presented, and all pending Claims believed allowable.

1. The Claim Rejections

The Examiner rejects Claims 31-44 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite. Claim 31 is clarified to recite an apparatus without the method steps of using the apparatus. It is believed the clarification to Claim 31 overcomes this ground of rejection. Claim 38 is rejected on another 112, second paragraph, ground, and is herein canceled.

The Examiner rejects Claims 31-44 under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as allegedly being directed to non-statutory subject matter. It is believed the clarification to Claim 31 overcomes this ground of rejection.

The Examiner rejects Claims 24-35 and 39-44 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,433,430 to Straessler et al. The Examiner rejects Claim 36 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over to Straessler et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,188,010 to Borchardt et al. The Examiner rejects Claims 37-38 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over to Straessler et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,695,185 to Bell.

Independent Claims 24 and 31 are novel and non-obvious over the cited art, and thus it is respectfully submitted that all other pending Claims (ultimately dependent upon one of Claims

24 and 31) are also novel and non-obvious over the cited art.

Claim 24 is herein clarified to recite an essence of the present invention. What is meant by the original phrase “which guidance is cancelled when the sheet has reached the conveyance position” is an action that takes place with the sheet being positioned in the conveyance position. At that point, according to the invention, the guidance is cancelled, not earlier as is the case in prior art situations, which causes the problems referred to in the introductory part of the *Specification*.

An aspect of the present invention resides in continuing the guidance until the sheet is in a position for being conveyed from the first carrier to the second carrier. Hence, the guidance area of the sheet remains supported until the sheet is in the conveyance position. The present invention provides a possibility of having this continuous support, and still prevents hindrance of a conveyance of the sheet from the one carrier to the other, by providing for a cancellation of the guidance, which takes place when the sheet is in the conveyance position.

The introductory part of the *Specification* clearly sketches the reason for the invention. When the guidance area of the sheet is not guided, curling or folding of this area may take place, which shows in the final product, i.e. a crosslaid fiber web. Guiding the guidance area of the sheet before the sheet reaches the conveyance position can be realized without any problems. However, continuing the supporting action all the way until the sheet reaches the conveyance position, and only canceling the supporting action when the sheet is ready to be conveyed, is a new and inventive concept, which can be realized in the way as disclosed in the patent application.

Straessler et al. does not disclose all the features of clarified Claim 24. **Figs. 1 and 2** of Straessler et al. clearly show that a guidance area of the sheets is not continually supported. In a first instance, the guidance area is supported by a belt **8**. However, this guidance is canceled before the sheet is in the conveyance position, as the belt **8** ends at a certain point before the conveyance position. When leaving the belt **8**, the guidance area of the sheets crosses a gap until it reaches an end of a lower draw-off belt **13**. Especially a front portion of the guidance area of the sheets may curl in that situation, as there is no retaining force during the time the gap is crossed. Hence, Straessler et al. does not disclose the present invention as claimed, but only

shows a prior art situation in which the problems occur which are solved by the invention.

Neither Borchardt et al. nor Bell cure the deficiencies of Straessler et al., and thus the present invention as recited in the Claims is also patentable over a combination of the cited references.

For the same reasons, claim 31 is novel and non-obvious over the cited art. Straessler et al. does not disclose guiding means for guiding a portion of sheets which are retained by a first carrier as far as in the conveyance region. As has been explained, guiding means are absent at the very point where the sheets enter the conveyance region.

2. Fees

This *Response and Amendment* is being filed within six months of the *Office Action*, and more specifically within three months. Thus, no extension fees are believed due.

No additional claims fees are believed due, as the pending claim count as to both total number of claims, and independent claims, remains covered under the original filing fee.

Nonetheless, authorization is hereby expressly given to charge any further fees due via deposit account No. 20-1507.

CONCLUSION

By the present *Response and Amendment*, this Application has been placed in full condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests early and favorable action. Should the Examiner have any further questions or reservations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned Attorney at 404.885.2773.

Respectfully submitted,

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being submitted by e-filing to the US Patent and Trademark Office in accordance with §1.8 on this date, via the EFS-Web electronic filing system.

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